

INTRODUCTION

Assuring access to health care has been defined by the Institute of Medicine as one of the key functions of government in public health¹. In addition to the ability to access medical care for an acute medical problem, having a primary health care provider, or a “medical home” is also believed to promote health. A person’s primary provider has access to his or her medical records, and is able to provide higher quality care by considering the medical and social context of a problem or condition. Routine preventive health visits are another way to promote health in the population. Preventive screening tests, such as Pap smear and blood pressure testing, can detect problems early, often while they are curable. Routine preventive visits also provide an opportunity for doctors to communicate with patients about healthy lifestyle choices.

The following topics are covered in this report:

- Reported problems with access to care
- Use of a primary health care provider
- Usual point of access to health care and emergency department/urgent care center use
- Outpatient medical visits in last 12 months
- Routine preventive health visit in last 12 months
- Hospital visits in last 12 months
- Mental health status (adults age 18+)
- Mental health care utilization (adults age 18+)

Information is reported for both adults and children for all but the last two topics. Each topic is reported by age and sex, additional demographic variables such as income, poverty, local health district, and health insurance status, and health status variables such as physical and mental health status. In addition, selected analyses are presented that compare health care access and utilization with health status and personal resources, such as income and health insurance status.

Report highlights are on pages 1 through 25. The information in this report is presented in detail in the Reference Tables on pages 27 through 57.

¹ In 1970 The Institute of Medicine was chartered by the National Academy of Sciences to examine policy and advise the federal government on matters related to public health. In 1986 the Institute formed The Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health to examine issues such as the current definition of “Public Health” and the appropriate role of government in assuring the health of the population. The committee’s report, entitled The Future of Public Health, was published in 1988. The report concluded that there are three core functions of public health agencies at all levels of government: assessment, policy development, and assurance.